

# Taking inspiration at women's transport conference



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**P**ilbara Heavy Haulage Girls CEO Heather Jones and her daughters Kirsty and Chelsea are all truck drivers at the pointy end of a major shift in the culture associated with the road transport industry in Australia. Their day jobs are driving general freight over dimensional loads and road trains across some of the most unforgiving and isolated roads in Australia.

Needless to say, they are busy women, so I count myself extremely lucky to have met them all at the recent Transport Women Australia Conference in Melbourne.

Heather's story and that of the Pilbara Heavy Haulage Girls (PHHG) is inspiring. Known for their bright pink trucks, PHHG is a not-for-profit organisation providing professional development opportunities and career pathways to newly licensed drivers from across Australia and encouraging women to consider long-haul truck driving as a career option.

In 2015, Heather was awarded the Australian Trucking Association's Most Outstanding Contribution to the Australian Road Transport Sector industry award. It was recognition of all that she and the Pilbara Heavy Haulage Girls had achieved in advancing the cause of women in the Australian road transport industry.

Practical training is a major part of what PHHG do, and recently, the West

Australian Government directed some of their enforcement officers to undertake time in a truck with PHHG drivers to experience what professional truck drivers have to deal with. According to Heather, the officers now have more respect for the difficulty of the freight task and the hard work and dedication of those in the industry.



**From left: Meryn Morrison and Heather Jones with Kirsty and Chelsea**

However, the Transport Women Australia Conference wasn't all about the Pilbara Girls. It included many interesting sessions and speakers, from Victoria's road management agency Vic Roads discussing latest safety initiatives to Australian industry leaders offering their advice and some useful information about the new Superior Heavy Vehicle Driver Licensing programme undertaken by the Driver Education Centre Australia (DECA).

The DECA programme uses both theory and practical training to give Australian drivers a greater understanding

of heavy vehicle dynamics and how to minimise rollover risk. I kept thinking back to the Rollover Prevention Safer Journey's Programme that NZTA/RTF and the associations are running back in New Zealand. It's good to know we are up with the play on rollover prevention.

Well-known global life skills coach Nikki Fogden-Moore hosted a session about achieving our goals and getting a work-life balance. She discussed the things we should concentrate on through different aspects of our life. She made the point that life comes in waves. You can't be on form in every aspect of your life, every day. Nobody can do that. Sometimes, your personal or work life must, by necessity, take a backseat. However, we shouldn't feel guilty about that, Nikki argued, as it is important to allow ourselves a mental break from time to time before picking things up again when time allows.

A big takeaway for me from the conference was that creating success for ourselves is reinforced by being positive and supporting other women in our industry. It is so easy to be critical, to bully, and use emotive language to get things our own way. However, that attitude has no place in today's workplace. It is crucial that women and younger people in our industry don't feel that they have to accept poor behaviour and can feel comfortable calling it out and reporting it. ■